

**Bilbrook Annual Parish Meeting**  
held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023, 6:00 pm at Bilbrook Village Hall  
**Minutes**

Present:

**Parish Councillors:** M Adams, S Adams, (Chairman), G Burnett (Vice-Chairman), D Hutchinson, P Hutchinson, D Williams.

**Representatives from:**

St Nicholas Church, The Codsall & Bilbrook Twinning Association, The Twentyman playing fields Association, The Coffee Pop in.

**Also present:**

K Daker (Parish Clerk). No members of the public were present.

**1.0 Apologies**

Cllr M Barrow, Cllr V Chapman, Cllr A Hill, Cllr S Leedham, Cllr B O'Connor, Cllr G Price. Friends of Bilbrook, Bilbrook Initiatives Hub

**2.0 Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2022 were approved and signed as a correct record by the chairman.

**3.0 Bilbrook Parish Council Chairman's Report (See Appendix 1)**

**4.0 Community Reports.** (Organisations who have received grants from Bilbrook Parish Council from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023) **(See Appendix 2)**

- 4.1 St. Nicholas Church
- 4.2 Coffee Pop in

**5.0 Community Reports.** (Other Organisations who have not received grants from Bilbrook Parish Council from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023) **(See Appendix 3)**

- 5.1 Codsall & Bilbrook Twinning Association
- 5.2 Twentyman Playing Fields Association
- 5.3 Bilbrook Initiatives Hub
- 5.4 Friends of Bilbrook

**7.0 Open Discussion – No issues were raised.**

The meeting closed at 7:15 pm

Signed: ..... Dated: .....

## **Appendix 1 – Bilbrook Parish Council Chairman's Report**

Good evening everyone, and welcome to the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting. I am Cllr S Adams and I have chaired Bilbrook Parish Council (BPC) for almost 2 years. As you are probably aware, Parish Council elections are due to take place on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May., however, the list of nominations has been released this afternoon. As there is 1 vacancy in each of the East, West and Lane Green Wards, all nominees are duly elected as councillors with effect from the 9th of May on condition they sign their acceptance of office forms. The 3 vacancies can be filled by co-option after the 4<sup>th</sup> of May.

- **East Ward** - Existing councillors D Hutchinson, P Hutchinson and D Williams will be joined by new councillors R Armitage, F Hopkins and A Lloyd.
- **West Ward** - Existing councillors M Adams, S Adams, G Burnett and S Leedham.
- **Lane Green Ward** - No nominees.

The following councillors have not completed nomination papers for the forthcoming election, and have therefore decided not to stand: - V Chapman, (16 years service), M Barrow (12 years), A Hill (8 years), J Michell (8 years), G Price (6 years), B O'Connor (4.5 years)

On behalf of BPC, I would like to thank all councillors for their contribution over their terms of office. For those leaving us, I send them our very best wishes for the future.

I will now ask councillors currently serving to introduce themselves, starting with Vice-Chair G Burnett, and then for those who will be joining the PC to do likewise.

I also introduce the Parish Clerk, who along with the assistant clerk, and Parish operatives have worked extremely hard to ensure that the Parish Council continues to meet its targets. The Parish Council has, subject to one requirement, been awarded the Quality Level of the Local Council Award Scheme which demonstrates that the council achieves good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement. Quality councils go above and beyond their legal obligations, leading their communities and continuously seeking opportunities to improve and develop even further.

Thankfully we are no longer operating under restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 virus, but we are ever mindful that it has not gone away, but that it is something that we have to live with, and deal with as appropriate. During the year:

**Platinum Jubilee Event on Friday 3 June** – We were blessed with wonderful weather and the event was well attended. Thanks to the Platinum Jubilee Working Group who organised the event. Peppa Pig and Batman (Stuart and Earl), Roy and Sam Draisey and all live performers, Mystical Productions for security, Mr Sparkles for Punch and Judy, Leanne (Jammy Spolodgers) for face painting, Bilbrook & Codsall Firefighters for bringing along the fire engine, Jimmy the Mower, The Wulfrun Warblers for leading “Last Night of the Proms”, Holy Cross Church for the use of the hall, Staff of the Woodman, Stall holders and community groups, volunteers who knitted and crocheted yarn bombing, and last but not least the Bilbrook Community who attended to make this such a special day.

**The Death of Queen Elizabeth II** - Just over 3 months after the Platinum Jubilee on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September Queen Elizabeth II passed away. The previous day, at the monthly BPC meeting, we had been updated on the arrangements for Operation Bridge, and within 45 minutes of the announcement, the flag was flying at half mast on the village green. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of September – over 100 residents joined Rev Simon Douglas and Parish Councillors and staff on the village green for a thanksgiving service followed by the reading of the proclamation of the new King, Charles III.

**Remembrance** – Once again this was attended with a record number of Wreaths laid this year. A huge thank you to the residents who crocheted poppies which looked stunning next to the VE75 memorial bench. Thank you also to our Councillors and Operatives who put up the lamp post poppies for the second year running. Thanks go to the Remembrance Working Group which organised the event.

**Christmas Lights** – A record crowd turned out to see Wolfie turn on the lights. Thanks go to the Christmas Working Group who organised the event.

**Bilbrook Play Park** – Following a public consultation and thanks to a grant from Veolia, BPC was able to upgrade the play park last October. Given the number of children playing on the play park, it has been a great success!

**The Queen's Green Canopy** – Councillors were joined by pupils from Bilbrook Middle School and representatives from the Forest of Mercia to plant an Oak tree on Bilbrook Village Green.

**Trees for Climate** - Thank you to the Forest of Mercia who supplied and planted Cherry Trees on the playing field as part of this Scheme.

**Memorial Plaques for Residents** - BPC believes that it is important to remember those who did a lot for the parish or helped to put Bilbrook on the map. This year plaques were placed on trees in memory of Joyce Green, who volunteered at Bilbrook Village Hall for many years and local historian Pat Quirke. All requests for a plaque are considered on an individual basis.

**Community Speed Watch** – a speed gun has been purchased, and training was given during the winter. We need more residents to be involved.

**Litter picking** – This continues to be carried out by parish operatives, WV8 Wombles and other volunteers.

**National Lottery Grant** – The Parish Council received monies that it has been used to replace rotting planters and bollards on the village green.

**Solar Farm Revenue** – some of this will be used to install further picnic benches on the playpark.

**Banks' Field** – Due to the increased housing proposed for Bilbrook on site 519, it was realised that the farmer will no longer need this grazing land which is rented from BPC. Therefore, BPC has taken steps to consider the future of the site, combined with increased biodiversity. Trees and fencing have been planted/installed around the edges of the site, funded by the Forest of Mercia. Should the site eventually not be used by the farmer, decisions will then be made as to how to develop it further.

**Allotments** – These are now all let out. From 2024 the renewal date will change from April to January to take account of the growing season.

**Neighbourhood Plan** – The draft Neighbourhood Plan policies are now being written by a consultant. In the coming months, we will enter a consultation period advising residents and any other stakeholders of the details of our draft policies which will look at ensuring that Bilbrook stays a great place to live now and in the future. Some of the areas we're looking at are Local Green Space, Heritage, Place and Design (for development). All costs of the Neighbourhood Plan are covered by a Government Grant.

**Going forward -**

**Health & Wellbeing** - At the recent Parish Council Summit it was recommended that Parish Councils become more involved with the community, with particular reference to health and the cost of living crisis. We will increase community engagement via the Bilbrook Buzz, social media and our website. As part of this we are organising along with Bilbrook Walking Group May day walks on Monday 1st May at 10.00 am from Bilbrook Village Hall. There will be a long walk and a short walk.

**Litter picking equipment** - We will continue to provide litter pickers, gloves and Hi-Viz vests to those helping with this, as previously supplied to those taking the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

**Corporate Social Responsibility** – BPC is engaging with local companies on Corporate Social Responsibility projects around the Parish.

**Policing** – BPC works closely with the Police as it takes seriously it's its duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to consider the crime and disorder implications of its various functions and to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area.

**Young Residents** – Bilbrook Parish Council is still looking at how to engage with the young people of the parish.

**Appendix 2 – Community Reports.** (Organisations who have received grants from Bilbrook Parish Council from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023)

### **St Nicholas Church, Codsall**

Parish churchyard grant summary report 2022/2023. Attached is a quick summary below of the work undertaken in previous years. The number of burials and interment of ashes have been calculated from the fees received. These do not include child burials for which there is no charge. It continues to be very well used.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Burials	20	26	22	21	23	21
Burial of Ashes	34	44	38	35	45	36
Grass Cutting	£7,480	£5,720	£6,160	£5,720	£6,160	£6,640
Moles + path						
spray	£410	£450	£480	£480	£480	£470
Hedges	£180	£180	£220	£220	£220	£220
Trees	£300	£0	£280	£240	£0	£0
Sundries	£5,690	£1,785	£1,590	£276	£7,864	£65
Total cost	£14,160	£8,135	£8,730	£6,936	£14,722	£7,195

The bi-annual churchyard tidy has now been fully reinstated following the years of the pandemic. It has been a year of consolidation and the new extension has yet to be consecrated. It will be needed shortly, and we are awaiting a date from the diocese. The churchyard has been a focal point for the community for many year.

There was an increase in the price of the mowing contract in 2022 which had been held firm for at least 6 years. Once the new area is consecrated it ill be necessary to add this to the contract which will incur additional costs.

It has been noted that the ground being used for burials currently is not as stable as the previous areas and steps are in hand to ensure the safety of the gravediggers. This will incur a one-off cost of around £2,300 in 2023.

Residents of Bilbrook, Codsall and Oaken have the right to be buried in the churchyard as they reside in the original boundary of the parish. Codsall Council is also being approached to continue their grant.

### **Coffee Pop in**

The Coffee Pop in would like to express gratitude on behalf of all concerned for the grant that was awarded to the Coffee Morning which enabled the purchase of 20 new chairs. These chairs replaced those that were looking very shabby. Coffee Pop-In continues to welcome local people for a drink and to enjoy a chat with others in a warm environment, and is especially valuable to those who are living alone. Coffee Pop-In meets regularly on Thursday mornings at Holy Criss Church Hall 10.30am - 11.30pm.

**Appendix 3 – Community Reports.** (Other Organisations who have not received grants from Bilbrook Parish Council from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023)

### **Codsall & Bilbrook Twinning Association**

I have been involved with the Twinning Association since 1996 when they decided to find somewhere to twin with. I am very proud of what we have achieved; the friendships and memories made. There is a very loyal group of members, however, they have found it hard to recruit new members to the group. The Association is very lucky to have members who all get on with each other and work to get the job done. Covid has brought the Twinning to a halt. A trip had to be cancelled but luckily they managed to get a refund. Historically, trips were by coach, however, costs have spiralled and Brexit has made travel more difficult. They have decided that going forward, no more trips will be by coach. The association has reserves which will be used to give French prizes to the . 11 people are going the week after the coronation (previously, 40-50 would go) by car.

### **Twentyman Playing Fields Association**

The year ended 31 March 2023 saw a continued relaxation in restrictions due to Covid-19, and we are now able to operate in more favourable conditions. I am grateful for the contributions of the Treasurer, Secretary, Football Administrator and Cllr D Williams without whose help running the hall would not be possible. We also appreciate the attendance of other committee members helping to run the hall, and would also welcome other volunteers from the community. A special thanks goes to our gate attendant and his wife, who despite retiring from employment with the Parish Council, continue to assist the Charity on many occasions.

During the year ongoing maintenance work has seen vital repair to the pitched roof in August 2022. This necessitated internal repairs to the hall as there was plaster damage. Thanks to contact via Cllr Sam Leedham we have received an offer from a local business to paint the hall as part of their community engagement, meaning no cost to us.

We remain in a stable financial position, even though the Playgroup closed after 38 years, and Dance with Nicole has moved to a purpose built dance studio. Party bookings for the hire of the hall continue to be received, many being from persons who have attended other events here. Next week we host 4 days of activities for school children nominated by their schools. Football bookings continue with matches being played when weather permits.

Going forward we hope to continue the maintenance and upgrade of the facilities, ensuring that the community can enjoy the hall and playing fields for years to come.

## **Bilbrook Initiatives Hub**

Apologies for not being able to attend this evening's meeting. Bilbrook Initiatives Hub continues to do small projects in a great way for our community.

Our warm spaces sessions ran every Tuesday and Wednesday 12-6. From October until March. We saw on a weekly basis 20-30 people between the sessions with these numbers fluctuating depending on the time of the month and the weather. Within the sessions we incorporated other services within the sessions to be able to offer signposting and make the most of the sessions, these included:

Food parcels were available on Tuesdays. We saw and continue to see an increase in the numbers weekly of people accessing this project. Our only criteria is that the people live within Bilbrook or Codsall. With the need for these is still being great and growing, we continue to help for as long as we can.

PAT (portable appliance testing) on Wednesday's. One of our committee members is a qualified PAT tester and we offer this service so people can check and use things for longer. This continues in our Wellbeing coffee club.

We have Everyone Health offering Health Checks during our January and February sessions, all days were fully booked. This is where people between that ages of 40-72 can have a health MOT and then access services to help them with weight management, stop smoking, or be signposted to GP's for help with blood pressure or cholesterol. We are trying to offer as much as we can to benefit the community within the spaces as well as food and drinks.

We now have gone back to our weekly well-being coffee club which has been running since 2018. A place for people to connect, feel less lonely and get signposted to services in the local area.

We continue to support the wildflower planting in the village, and wildflower planting projects at Lane Green.

We continue to help feed the older generation of the village and provide the much needed company and additional help.

This year we will continue to make sure that the community who are struggling with choosing between heating and eating find the help they need. Continue to welcome all to Coffee club. And support projects with other groups and individuals through collaboration.

## **Friends of Bilbrook**

Our main area of concentration remains Jubilee Wood. We hosted our usual dawn chorus walk, mammal survey by students from Rodbaston College and our bat walk with great success. We took part in our 6th RSPB birdwatch in January and await the national results.

Between April 22 and April 23, we have collected 220 bags of litter, carried out 12 water tests and 3 river fly surveys, held one bird ringing event with the Belvidere ringers. We ringed our first Kestrel a magnificent bird to see at close range. We have carried out 5 larger litter picks around the village with Lane Green First School, Bilbrook Middle School and the wider community.

We are recording a gradual increase in Phosphate levels in the Moat brook and a steady rise in temperature. We report our findings to the EA via waterside care, however from March 31st this year the funding for this project was withdrawn by Severn Trent and if we wish to keep reporting our findings it will cost us £400 per year. This seems madness at a time when our waterways are in such a bad state and need improvements. We continue to try to find ways to ensure that the work we do in

looking after the Moat brook is reported nationally as part of the national effort to improve our water courses.

Our members continue to litter pick as part of the WV8 Wombles, and have now registered as Litter heroes with Keep Britain Tidy to ensure the litter we collect counts nationally and the data can be used to lobby government. We are meeting with SSDC to try and work together to stop the problem of litter. As we heard someone say 'if you had a leaky tap you wouldn't just keep mopping up the water, you would fix the leak'. We can't keep picking up these volumes of litter, we need to stop it being dropped.

We pulled 10000 strands of Himalayan Balsam from along the brook and were joined by a group from JLR on a balsam bash as part of their CSR.

We hosted Holy Cross church for their second Forest Church session and another one is booked for 16th April at 4pm.

We are still waiting to hear the outcome of our application for the public right of way between the playing fields and Jubilee Wood.

We applied for 2 grants from SSDC as part of their climate prize fund and were awarded both grants. One was to hold a bird box making workshop in Jubilee Wood. 5 families attended and made 2 birdboxes each to take home. The remaining boxes were made by Year 5 at Bilbrook Middle School, who then came out with us to help put the boxes up around the playing field. The other grant was to set up a repair café where people could bring items that would otherwise go to landfill to be repaired, saving money and preventing waste. We have held 2 repair cafes so far and both have been hugely successful with over 75 items successfully repaired. We have a wonderful team of volunteers who give up their time to repair items from Jewellery to Bikes. We are planning another repair café in June.

In January we carried out the annual task of cleaning out the bird boxes in Jubilee Wood ready for this years nests. 2/3 of the boxes had been used which is great news.

Sadly, some residents are using Jubilee Wood as their local tip by throwing rubbish over their back fence into the wood. This is very frustrating and time consuming for our group. We are working with SSDC to try to stop the problem.

We have been given a female black poplar tree which we have planted in Jubilee Wood close to our iconic male black poplar tree in the hope that nature will take its course.

We planted 13 trees along Pendeford Mill Lane, a project that we have been working towards for many years. We are also working with BPC on a larger project to improve habitats along the Moat Brook further downstream.

Dates for the future:

14th April – Skittles night at Holy Cross Church Hall

26th April - AGM

14th May – Dawn Chorus Walk

2nd September – Bird Ringing in Jubilee Wood

23rd September – Family Forest fun day in Jubilee Wood

25th November – Christmas Wreath Willow weaving

And we will continue to work with local schools and other groups for young people educating them to be the conservationists of the future.